**Malachi**

**Return to Me, and I Will Return to You**

**What you need to KNOW:**

Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament era. He spoke to the nation about 100 years after they had returned from their exile in Babylon. By this point, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple had been rebuilt. With the restoration of the Temple, also came a return of the prescribed sacrificial system of worship. Things were going pretty well for them, but as was their tendency, the Jews had once again slipped into a lackadaisical attitude toward the Lord. Their spiritual drift was evidenced in a general failure to craft well-lived lives.

Malachi spoke prophetically into this situation by bringing stinging indictments to both the people and the priests. The charges against them included: half-hearted worship ***(1:8),*** stingy tithes and offerings ***(3:5-10),*** and attitudes that viewed service to God as being not worthy of the effort ***(3:14).*** Their general faithlessness was also evidence by their religiously mixed marriages and the climbing divorce rates between ‘believing’ couples ***(2:10-16).*** Malachi also mocked the people for believing that, in spite of their waywardness, they still

believed they deserved blessing and prosperity.

Many of Malachi’s messages used a question-and-answer method to get the point across. He often introduced a subject with a question or statement detailing the Lord’s charge against them. Then, he would expose their wrong thinking and attitudes by ‘putting words in their mouths’ that anticipated their answer to the charge. Finally, he presented the overwhelming evidence against them, ripping apart their defense.

Much of Malachi is negative in tone, but his prophesies are also peppered with a few guarantees of great blessings if they will reform their attitudes, affections and lifestyles. An appropriate summary of the intention of the book is found in ***chapter 3*** where, through the prophet, the Lord commands the people to ***“return to me, and I will return to you” (vs. 7).***

The lion share of Malachi is ‘forthtelling’ in nature, that is, it is a call to action for the people of that time. But, like all of the prophets, the way he spoke into the lives of the ancients also acts as a kind of mirror for believers of all generations. By gazing into this ancient mirror, we are able to evaluate how we are doing in living out our loyalties and commitments.

Malachi, the last book of the Older Testament, was written 400 years before the coming of the Messiah. Remarkably, this last prophet of the Older Testament, boldly ‘foretells’ not only the coming of the Messiah, but also that someone would pave the way for the Expected Redeemer. He said, ***“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty” (3:1).*** And, indeed, four centuries later this prophesy was fulfilled when John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord, Jesus Christ!

**GET GOING!**

**Take an unhurried walk through the prophesies of Malachi. Move carefully and contemplatively. *Make your journey an opportunity to return to Him, believing that He will return to you.***